

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 239.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 29, 1893.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE early sunlight of a lovely September morning was streaming into the room through every crack and chink in the blinds and curtains, making the light from the still burning lamp look yellow, dim, and unnatural. It was Julian's sitting-room in the house in Chelsea, and the light, falling here and there, touched into distinctness many of those little luxurious details on which the evening light had fallen on that winter day eighteen months before, when Mrs. Romaine had stood upon the threshold and looked round upon her completed arrangements, waiting then for the use which was to give them life. On a chair by the writing-table, his head dropped sideways on his arm as it rested on the table, sat Julian Romaine asleep.

He was asleep, but he was not at rest. His face was grey and drawn; it twitched painfully, and his hand was fiercely clenched. Gradually an expression of terror and despair gathered on his features, until they were almost convulsed, and with a strangled, gasping cry he woke and started to his feet, trembling in every limb, and with great drops standing on his forehead. He stood clutching at a chair for support, while the first poignant impression of his dream subsided, and then he moved as though impelled by some reactionary impulse to collect himself. He glanced at the clock and saw that the hands pointed to a quarter-past six. He was vaguely conscious of having heard it strike six, so that he

could have slept for a few moments only. His lips twitched slightly at the thought of what those few moments had held for him. Then he realised that he was cold, that all his limbs were stiff and aching, and he dragged himself slowly across the room, drew the curtains and the blinds, and stood there in the sunshine.

It was the first movement of physical consciousness which he had felt since he left the office of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company on the morning of the previous day.

How that day had passed he did not know. Here and there out of the blackness a picture of himself stood out with uncertain distinctness. He knew that he had telegraphed to his mother to the effect that he might not return to Henley for some time. He remembered writing the words though he could recall no mental process by which the elaborate excuse he had made had occurred to him. He knew that somewhere dinner had been placed before him, though where, and whether he had eaten, he knew not at all. For the rest, an impression of ceaseless walking, of interminable streets giving place imperceptibly to the four walls of his own room, made up the only actual background in his memory to the intense mental consciousness which had usurped for the time being the tangibility of material things.

The favourable turn in the affairs of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company had been founded on a deliberate system of forgery and fraud planned by Ramsay, subscribed to and participated in by Julian. The telegram as to the new lead had been concocted in the office in the City; the diamonds exhibited as earnest of the future yield of the mine had been bought for that purpose; and not one penny of the money

paid in debentures had ever been intended for application to the working of the ruined mine. If these facts should come to light—and hostile enquiries once instituted on the spot, only one of those incredibly lucky chances to which gamblers and swindlers alike owe so much could avert such a catastrophe—the consequences were obvious. Public exposure, public ignominy and execration, wholesale and irremediable loss of position, were absolutely inevitable. And as inevitable if he remained in England, the dark gulf in which his life must be swallowed up and closed—as far as everything which constituted life for him was concerned—whether he fled from it or whether it clutched him, was the legitimate reward of his doings—penal servitude.

He could not realise it. He could not face it. He had beaten it back, he had thrust it down again and again during that long day and night, and again and again the horror had swept over him, gaining always in certainty and reality. Struggle against it as he might and did, clutching at his consciousness, shaking and rending it with a force not to be resisted, and growing ever stronger and stronger, there dawned a dazed, bewildered conviction that the end he saw before him was indeed the inevitable end, that in that black gulf, and no other, all his efforts and fierce strivings were to find their consummation. He had dugged it with his own hands; he had followed on towards it in a very desperation of defiance and recklessness, goaded by a grinding sense of failure and frustration to a wild daring which had looked like courage and resolution. But the spirit which had stimulated him was not in himself. All unconscious of it as he was, he had been drunk with the thought of what lay beyond that gulf; drunk with a desperate, unreasoning anticipation of triumph. The hideous possibility of failure confronted him now practically for the first time, and before it all his fictitious stamina shrivelled away, as in its very nature it was bound to do. A vague, confounded comprehension of the consequences which he had brought upon himself rose upon him, walling him in on every side; and about those consequences, as connected with himself, there was all the ghastly incongruity and unreality of a hideous nightmare. He had never understood the realities of life. He had crushed down their impulses in his heart. He had called superficialities essentials; selfish ignorance, practical sense; and he had worked and

fought in a false atmosphere, and for a false aim.

And now, instead of that fictitious triumph which he had looked to grasp, he found himself face to face with facts so sordid and so relentless that he could hardly recognise them as facts at all. His world was tottering into ruins all about him; the clash and crisis of imminent downfall and disgrace was stunning him and shaking him through and through; and in the wild tumult and confusion all the limitation of his nature seemed to break up, as it were, into one blind chaos of protest and repudiation, dominated only by despair. Nothing fixed or steadfast held its place. The very passions by which he had been driven on had been borne down and numbed. The thought of Clemence had become merely a vague element in the confusion. Of his mother he did not think at all. Even that dark factor in his being—the perversion of his instincts as to truth and falsehood, honesty and dishonesty—which had asserted its grim presence with the very awakening of his character; which had dictated the first steps along the path of which he stood now at the end; was swept into solution now with every other element in his character. It had held its place, hitherto, side by side with the other motive powers by which his life had been regulated; dictating the lines on which those powers should work, strengthening and developing with the demands they put upon it. But it had remained the servant of a stronger passion, and as far as any power of support or guidance was concerned it had gone down in the flood. He had no perception, truly, of the moral aspect of his position, no sense of guilt or of remorse. He only knew that he was beaten, that it was all over with him.

He stood there at the window staring out into the sunshine, seeing nothing, conscious of nothing but the gulf before him, as utterly and absolutely isolated in his misery as though he had been the only creature living in the world. The desperate struggle with facts was sinking into a hopeless confused acceptance of them; into a dazed, bewildered contemplation of details which seemed to rise slowly into distinctness out of the fog which hung about them; to rise and fade again without volition on his part. Details connected with the future came first, and he looked at them and understood them with stunned composure as

though they stood outside him all together. Then he found himself wondering heavily as to the time that must pass before the certainty that was in himself became literal knowledge. There was no sense of any possible chance of salvation in his mind.

By-and-by he became heavily and confusedly aware that another day had begun; another day through which he must carry his horrible, bewildering burden—no longer in the semi-unconsciousness of yesterday, but alive now in every fibre to its intolerable pressure.

He went out into the sunshine by-and-by, out into the streets he knew so well; and as he walked along there came upon him a ghastly sense of being but a shadow among shadows. The life about him seemed to have receded to an incalculable distance, to have lost all substance. He himself as he appeared to other people had no existence, and his real self had no existence for any one but himself. He was face to face with black, implacable reality, and before its presence all the superficialities and conventionalities which had usurped its place vanished like the shades they were.

He walked, always with that chill sense of isolation on him, from Chelsea to the City; in motion, in continual motion only, was his misery endurable. Ramsay was not at the office when he arrived, and a message from him, left with the secretary, informed Julian that he would not be there that day. His absence affected Julian not at all. There was no suspense in his mental attitude to make him crave for even a blow to end it. To his battered consciousness delay before the final agony had something of the appearance of rest or respite. He did the work he had come to do with a numbed comprehension of its import, and then as he passed out again into those horribly unreal streets there came upon him a desperate longing for human companionship; a desperate longing to break through his solitude and touch another human creature. He would go to the club he thought dully. He must speak to some one; he must get some assurance of his own identity or its unfamiliarity would drive him mad.

There were two or three men only who were known to him in the room when he arrived, and even as they greeted him they seemed to elude him; to retreat and to lose all tangibility beyond the yawning gulf which lay between himself and them. He tried to talk, he tried des-

perately to bridge the gulf. In vain. He turned away and went out into the streets again, alone with the one terrible reality which the world seemed to contain.

The failure broke him down. An unendurable horror of himself and of the world, a very terror of his misery, rolled down upon him and overwhelmed him. It was one of those realisations of the impotency of humanity before the strokes of the infinitely greater than humanity which seize upon a man sometimes when all the wrappings of life and custom are stripped from him, and he finds himself in primeval defencelessness. He could only fight wildly with it. Those instincts and affinities through which such moments work out strength and comprehension were utterly submerged in him now; and the experience could be for him nothing but a blind horror, giving place at last to the old stunned, hopeless confusion and despair. And when at last he dragged himself upstairs to his room in the Temple late at night he was utterly exhausted, mentally and physically. He dropped into a chair and sank into a heavy sleep.

Ten days followed; ten long days giving place to heavy nights; ten nights passing into monotonous days. By degrees Julian fell into a species of dull routine, in which he ate and drank, and even slept; passed to and fro along the London streets; stunned almost to stupefaction. He went each day to the office and sat there all day long doing little; sitting, for the most part, staring into space or walking up and down with heavy, regular steps. He was rarely disturbed. Ramsay appeared but seldom; his visits were brief, and he was uncommunicative.

At last there came a morning when he reached the office to find upon his desk a letter in Ramsay's familiar handwriting.

Julian sat down before it and looked at it for a moment, his face twitching slightly. Then he broke the seal.

"DEAR ROMAYNE," he read,—*"Your friend, Compton, holds the whole affair in his hand. Marston Loring gave him the tip. You will do as you think best about meeting the shareholders. I shall not be present myself, as I am leaving England for the present to-night. —Yours, "ALFRED RAMSAY."*

The letter bore date of the previous day.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

A WHITE face, drawn and set into a look which pitifully travestied the calmness of despair; bloodshot eyes with something in them of the incomprehending agony of a hunted animal; quivering lips which would not take the rigid line at which they aimed, and from which seemed to radiate an indescribable suggestion of youthfulness, which made the bewildered desperation of the face infinitely piteous. Two hours had passed, and Julian was seated at his writing-table in his room in the Temple. He held a pen in his hand, and before him lay a sheet of paper bearing three words only, "My dear Clemence." On the table behind him lay a roughly packed travelling-bag and a "Bradshaw."

Flight, instant flight was the one course that had occurred to him. Such a necessity had been present to him from the first, and in the almost insane terror which had mastered him on finding himself deserted by Ramsey, thoughts which had lain dormant in his mind during the last two days had taken shape almost without volition on his part, and he had made his plans with wild haste. He knew nothing, he thought of nothing but that he must go at once, that at any moment he might find himself stopped, at any moment it might be too late!

No thought of that last refuge of the detected criminal, suicide, presented itself to him. The realities of life were as yet too strange to him. Wrenched from his moorings, tossed away to drift on the pitiless sea, he could not realise what was the depth of that sea, how futile must be his struggles to keep himself afloat. The reality of death had never touched his superficial nature.

He made his preparations with the promptitude of desperation, and as each detail was despatched, one deed that must be done began to press into his consciousness. Some word must be sent to Clemence. With this necessity he found himself at last confronted with no further possibility of postponement.

But no words would come to him. Little as he understood it, all the bewildered misery of his heart was what he wanted to convey to her; all the incoherent horror which was tossing him to and fro. What words were possible when there was no reason, only blind, agonised feeling? There was one aspect of his shipwreck in which it was only the end and consummation of

his ten weeks of silence towards Clemence; those ten weeks in which he saw now only cruelty and futility where he had seen before wisdom and necessity. His failure, his ruin, had a side on which they touched him only in his connection with her; it became the failure to keep the promise he had made her when he saw her last; the ruin of his vision of a life with her. He sat there staring stupidly at the paper, and gradually all thoughts slipped away from him but the thought of Clemence herself. A hunger, such as his selfish young heart had never known, rose in him for her presence, her pity. His misery turned to her, stretching forth empty, despairing hands, until the sick longing dominated his whole consciousness.

Then out of the aching yearning there came to him suddenly a recollection of the letter he had received ten days before; the letter which he had thrust into a drawer in his blind, foolhardy determination, unopened. The end on which he had set himself to wait had vanished for ever. Everything by which he had held was overturned and submerged. But the letter was there still. The letter had come from Clemence.

He unlocked with trembling eagerness the drawer in which he had placed it, drew out the envelope and tore it open. That it could bring no comfort to him, that there could, indeed, be only aggravation of his wretchedness in it, was as nothing to him. It was to touch Clemence that he wanted; Clemence, and Clemence only was the cry of his whole being. The letter was very short, a few lines only. He ran his eyes over it with hungry avidity, and then they seemed to stop suddenly, and all the quivering life seemed to freeze on his features. A moment passed and a great, dry sob broke from him; he dashed his head down upon the table with a bitter, boyish cry:

"Clemmie! Clemmie!"

Simple, beautiful with that wonderful new tenderness which comes to a woman with the consummation of her womanhood, pathetic in their gentleness beyond all words, the few brief lines brought him from Clemence the most sacred tidings that can pass between husband and wife, tidings of the birth of their child.

"Clemmie!"

The word broke from him again, a pitiful, despairing sob, and then he lay there, long, dry sobs shaking him from head to



foot as that bitterest of all waves, the un-availing realisation of what might have been contrasted with what is, swept over him and overwhelmed him. The reality, touched into life by her letter, as though Clemence's voice had spoken to him, which he had thrown away; the reality on which in doing so, he had hurled himself, stood out before him in pitiless distinctness; and in his ignorance and blindness, in his utter want of comprehension of the moral aspect of his acts and the stern justice of the retribution he was meeting, there was no light or cohesion for him anywhere in the world, and darkness and chaos had closed about him.

Nearly an hour passed before he moved, and lifted a white, haggard face, marred with the agony of impotent regret. He looked about him vaguely, pushing his hair back heavily from his forehead, and as his eye fell upon the travelling-bag, that instinctive sense of the necessity upon him which had stirred him with no consciousness on his part, deepened into a mechanically active impulse. He must go. He paused a moment, and then he drew out a fresh sheet of paper.

"Falconer!" he muttered. "Falconer will see to them. There's no one else!"

It was as though the fire through which he was passing had burnt away from him all recollection, even of his mother. He had thought of her for long only as the source of all that was unpleasant in his life. Now in the sharpness of his pain a haze had spread itself over the past, and all thought of the means by which the present position had been brought about was obliterated.

He wrote rapidly, desperately, in a handwriting which was hardly legible, for a few minutes; then he thrust the letter into an envelope, which he directed to Dennis Falconer, and rose. His original intention of writing to Clemence had left him. It had become an impossibility, and side by side with his sense of his utter incapacity to find any words in which to speak to her, there had risen in him a heartbroken impulse to see her face once more and for the last time.

The sunshine of the day had given place to a drizzling rain when he turned into that quiet little street which had witnessed their last meeting. The dazed sense of the necessity for flight was strong upon him. Darkness had fallen; he had left his room for the last time; in another hour he would be in the Liverpool train a fugitive

from justice; and in the terror and confusion of the realisation of that one all-absorbing fact, the only other thought that lived in him was his blind desire for one sight of Clemence. He had come to the little street unreasoningly, weighing no probabilities as to whether or no she would be at work; not even understanding that there were probabilities to weigh; coming there simply because he had seen her there before and knew of no other chance of seeing her. He took up his position in a doorway by which she must pass, and waited. It seemed to him that he had been standing there, utterly alone, for hours, when the door, from which his haggard, sunken eyes had never stirred, opened.

As on that other occasion Clemence was the last to come out, but she came this time walking quickly and eagerly. For an instant as she passed beneath the lamp the light fell on her face, and as Julian's eyes rested on it for that instant, he clutched at the railing by which he stood. Then she came on in the shadow, still followed by those hungry eyes.

Perhaps she felt their gaze. Perhaps her own heart felt the pang that was rending his. In the very act of passing him she stopped suddenly and turned towards him, looking into the dimness in which he was shrouded. She stretched out her hands with a low, inarticulate cry.

He had her in his arms straining her to him with a despairing passion which he had never known before, and she clung to him half frightened by his touch.

"Julian!" she whispered. Then as no word came from him, only his burning kisses pressed upon her upturned face, she went on softly: "Dear, weren't you going to speak to me?" Still he did not speak, and with a look and accent indescribably beautiful in their tender womanliness, she said: "You didn't think I would reproach you?"

"It's good-bye, Clemmie," he muttered hoarsely. "Good-bye! I—I'm going away for—a little while."

He could as easily have killed her, at that moment, as have told her the truth.

"Going away!" she echoed, with a little catch in her breath. "Where, dear?"

"To—America." He could not tell her all the truth, but there was no power in him to originate an unnecessary lie. He felt her arms tighten about him, and he answered the appeal hoarsely, hurrying out the words. "I—I'm leaving a letter about

you, and——" his voice died away in his throat as he tried to speak of his child, and then he went on rapidly and unevenly: "It will be—all right. Clemence! Clemence! try to forgive me. Good-bye, dear, good-bye!"

He drew her hands from about his neck, kissing them wildly. Her hold tightened instinctively upon his fingers, and she was trembling very much.

"You're not going—now?" she whispered.

"Yes," he answered hoarsely. "Now!"

Then, as he saw the look which came over her face, the desperate necessity for reassuring her came upon him. He tried to smile.

"America is nothing nowadays, you know," he said in a harsh, unnatural tone. "It's no distance. I shall be—back directly. Say good-bye to me, won't you? I must go."

She let her face fall on his shoulder, pressing it closer and closer, as though she could never tear herself away.

"I'm frightened for you, dear," she said. "I'm frightened. Are you sure, sure, there is nothing—wrong?"

"Quite sure—of course."

"You will be back soon?"

"Quite soon."

There was a moment's quivering silence, and then Clemence slowly lifted her face. He took her in his arms again, and their lips met in one long agonised kiss. Neither spoke again. When he released her, Julian, with a face like death, turned and went away down the street, his head bent, his whole figure tense as though he were facing a blinding wind. Clemence stood for a moment still as a statue, her eyes wide, her face quite quiet. Then she too went away through the night.

#### SOME GREAT WRITERS AND THEIR FAVOURITE READING.

"How pleasant it is to reflect," says Leigh Hunt in one of his pleasantly discursive essays, "that the greatest lovers of books have themselves become books." And, indeed, most of the master spirits of literature have loved books rather as great readers than as jealous collectors of rare volumes. There was no society in London so agreeable that Macaulay would have preferred it at breakfast or at dinner to the company of Sterne or Fielding, Horace Walpole or Boswell. Gibbon, again, was

possessed with a love of reading, which he declared in a well-known phrase he would not exchange for the treasures of India; and Southey, in one of his letters to Miss Bowles, says: "Books are all but everything to me. I live with them and by them, and might almost say for them and in them." This love of reading has generally taken possession of its willing victims at a very early age, and has stayed with them till the close of life. Coleridge, while at school, read through the entire catalogue of books in a neighbouring library, folios and all, at his own hazard as to whether he understood them or not; "running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily." With this passion for knowledge, therefore, it is hardly surprising that before his fifteenth year he had bewildered himself in metaphysics and in theological controversy. With regard to Lord Byron while at Dulwich, Dr. Glennie tells us that the future poet had found among other books open to him a set of British poets from Chaucer to Churchill, "which I am almost tempted to say he had more than once perused from beginning to end." At a later period Byron himself says: "I read eating, read in bed, read when no one else reads." Keats devoured all the books of history, travel, and fiction in his school library, and was for ever borrowing more. "In my mind's eye," says his schoolfellow, Mr. Cowden Clarke, "I now see him at supper, sitting back on the form from the table holding the folio volume of Burnet's 'History of his own Time' between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it." Henry Hallam read many books when four years old, and composed sonnets at ten. Lord Macaulay, before he was fifteen, in writing to his mother, recommends her (perhaps somewhat to her astonishment) —to read Boccaccio—at least, in Dryden's metrical version—and goes on to compare his merits with those of Chaucer, to whom he "infinitely prefers him."

Tales of travel and adventure are never without their charm for imaginative minds, and the works of the old novelists have had a great effect in stimulating the fancy of those who were themselves destined to rival their teachers in the art of romance.

An enthusiastic lover of fiction was Hazlitt, the critic, and few writers have urged its claims with a greater degree of eloquence. Cooke's edition of the "British Novelists" entranced him, and the world he found out in their pages was to him "a dance

through life, a perpetual gala day." Of their power to glid the barrenness of life he writes, "Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, this Christian's burden, drop from off one's back and transport oneself by the help of a little musty duodecimo to the time when 'ignorance was bliss,' and when we first got a peep at the raree show of the world through the glass of fiction!" Even at the close of his life he was able to read the recently published novel of "Paul Clifford" with undiminished enjoyment, and to lose himself for a while in the highwayman's stirring adventures.

The great dramatists have claimed—as is natural—many admirers among literary men, though there have not been wanting some who were unable to see any charm in their writings. Charles Lamb read them at a time when little attention was paid to them, and his study of Massinger and Beaumont and Fletcher led him to write the drama "John Woodvil." The dramatists, he declares, were "a first love"—one to which, indeed, he always remained true—and with all the zeal of a book-lover he was wont to spend more than he could well afford in purchasing old folio editions of his favourite authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Byron, on the other hand, calls the old dramatists "mad and morbid mountebanks," a judgement which shows him to have been unaware of the artistic tendencies of his day. Carlyle, again, hardly ever refers to the Elizabethan dramatists with the exception of Shakespeare.

The remarkable hold taken by the Greek and Latin classics on the minds of the majority of our principal writers is reflected in their works. The idea of treating the classics as light literature is not one which would commend itself to the ordinary schoolboy of to-day. Many of our old writers, however, did so regard them. Milton, when staying at Horton, enjoyed a complete holiday in turning over the Latin and Greek authors. The poet Prior was first noticed as a boy by Lord Dorset sitting in his uncle's tavern and reading Horace. Gray, writing to Horace Walpole from Burnham in Buckinghamshire, says that he is reclining at the foot of one of the venerable beeches, while "the timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil as I commonly do." He delighted, however, more especially to wander

in the less trodden paths of classical literature, and writing to his friend Wharton in 1747, he says: "I have read Pausanias and Athenæus all through, and Æschylus again. I am now in Pindar and Lysias, for I take verse and prose together like bread and cheese." Yet this somewhat severe course of reading did not prevent him from appreciating the elegant trifling of the French authors Gresset and Piron, whose influence is seen in the poem which immortalised Horace Walpole's cat, "Selima." Homer has always had many admirers, and, particularly in Chapman's translation, has often proved a powerful stimulus to poetic fancy. Macaulay, with his omnivorous appetite for literature, is said to have read no less than fourteen books of the *Odyssey* in a walk between Worcester and Malvern. Of our own poets, the beauty of the ever vernal Chaucer,

Whose fresh woods

Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year, has only comparatively recently received adequate recognition. Spenser, on the other hand, especially in the "Faëry Queen," has been the favourite reading of nearly every poet. Pope delighted in it. It is said of Keats by a friend that "though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. It was the 'Faëry Queen' that awakened his genius." Leigh Hunt says: "When a melancholy thought is importunate I give another glance at my Spenser." Milton, like Spenser, claims an almost universal allegiance. It was one of Walter Savage Landor's favourite books, and while living in South Wales he writes: "My prejudices in favour of ancient literature began to wear away on reading 'Paradise Lost,' and even the great hexameter sounded to me tinkling when I had recited aloud in my solitary walks on the seashore the haughty appeal of Satan and the repentance of Eve." Dr. Johnson is said to have gorged books, and it is interesting to know who his favourite authors were, though censure rather than praise is the characteristic note of the great literary despot's style—as in his reply to some one who asked him whether he thought any man of a modern age could have written "Ossian." "Yes, sir. Many men, many women, and many children!" The "Pilgrim's Progress" won his regard, and Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" was, he declared, the only book which ever got him out of bed sooner than he wished. He also looked favourably on the works of Sir



Thomas Browne. Of some of his contemporaries he affected to have a very poor opinion. "What influence," he asks, "can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover to show light at Calais." With equal perverseness he tries to make out that Sheridan is dull, "naturally dull, but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him." "Such an excess of stupidity, sir," he winds up, "is not in nature."

Very different is the estimate of Sheridan formed by Byron, who was never tired of praising him as the author of the best modern comedy, the best farce, and the best oration ever heard in this country. The Italian poets of the Middle Ages have ever been the favourite reading of a select few. Men as different as Milton, Gray, and Shelley have all been admirers of Dante and Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto, while Byron preferred Tasso to Spenser. Boccaccio has been loved by many men of letters from the time of Chaucer. Landor when at Fiesole read him with all the additional advantages of local colouring, and Shelley writes: "How much do I admire Boccaccio! What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us." Leigh Hunt includes him in a list of the favourite works in his library: "I looked sideways," he says, "at my Spenser, my Theocritus, and my 'Arabian Nights,' then above at my Italian poets, then behind me at my Dryden, and Pope, my romances, and my Boccaccio, then on my left side at my Chaucer, who lay on a writing-desk, and thought how natural it was in Charles Lamb to give a kiss to an old folio as I once saw him do to Chapman's Homer." The very perusal of the backs of such books he held to be a discipline of humanity, and yielded to none in his love of bookstall urbanity. "I have spent," he writes, "as happy moments over the stalls—until the woman came out—as any literary apprentice boy who ought to be moving onwards."

Southey's "Life of Wesley" was called by Coleridge a darling book, the favourite of his library, more often in his hands than any other, and to this and the "Life of Baxter" he was wont to resort whenever sickness or languor made him feel the want of an old friend. The poems of William Lisle Bowles had a great influence

both on Coleridge and on Charles Lamb. Coleridge wrote of the work as having "done his heart more good than all the other books he ever read, excepting his Bible." Lamb complains when at the India House that not a soul there loved Bowles, and scarce one had heard of Burns. Chance has very frequently had a marked effect in determining the bent of a future author's genius or the path of literature in which he would hereafter tread. The "Books lying open millions of surprises" are alluded to by De Quincey; "books, that is to say, left casually open without design or consciousness, from which some careless passer-by, when throwing the most negligent of glances upon the page, has been startled by a solitary word lying as it were in ambush waiting and lurking for him, and looking at him steadily as an eye searching the haunted places in his conscience."

The direction of Dr. Johnson's studies was partly determined, we are told, by the discovery of a folio of Petrarch lying on a shelf where he was looking for apples. It was an accident again which threw the continuation of Echart's Roman History in the way of Gibbon. "To me," he says, "the reigns of the successors of Constantine were absolutely new, and I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast. . . . I procured the second and third volumes of Howell's 'History of the World,' which exhibit the Byzantine period on a larger scale. Simon Ockley first opened my eyes, and I was led from one book to another, till I had ranged round the circle of Oriental history." Burns, too, though he had the choice of such works as the "Spectator," "Locks on the Human Understanding," and Pope, together with odd plays of Shakespeare, which formed the staple reading of his home, nevertheless owed most to an old collection of songs. "This," he says, "was my vade mecum! I pored over them during my rest or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, and sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is!" Charles Lamb was one of the many admirers of Isaac Walton's "Compleat Angler," and none have paid that work a handsomer tribute of praise. "It would sweeten a man's temper," he exclaimed, "at any time to read it; it would Chris-

tianise every discordant, angry passion." But his favourite authors, after all—the sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention—were old Kit Marlowe and Drayton, Drummond, of Hawthornden, and Cowley; and, in one of his essays, he recalls the time he spent at Blakesware, and "the cheerful store-room in whose lob-window seat I used to sit and read Cowley with the grass plot before, and the hum and flapping of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me."

Shelley was a great reader all through his too brief life. As a boy at school at Sion House his favourite amusement was novel-reading; and at Oxford he is said to have been lost in books for sixteen out of the twenty-four hours of each day. When at Pisa he was up betimes reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread. The Bible, with its fervour of diction and wealth of imagery, had a considerable influence upon him—as upon his brother poet Byron—one of his favourite parts being the Book of Job. Ever fond of sailing, he sometimes read as he steered, and at his death his jacket was found with a volume of *Æschylus* in one pocket and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back as if the reader in the act of reading had hastily thrust it away.

Among women authors, Jane Austen was nourished on standard literature; she was minutely acquainted with Richardson, and was fond of Johnson's works, and read the "Spectator," like every one else in those days; but she was especially devoted to Crabbe, of whom she was wont to say that if she ever married she could fancy being Mrs. Crabbe. In later years she was charmed with Scott's poetry, and admired the first *Waverley* Novels.

A curious selection of books fed the mind of George Eliot in her earlier days: Elia's "Essays," Defoe's "History of the Devil," the now-forgotten "Rasselas" of Dr. Johnson, and the "Pilgrim's Progress"—as perennially inspiring as the "Faëry Queen," or the "Thousand and One Nights." At a later date she was fascinated with "Waverley."

Such are some of the books which have been the favourite reading of many great minds—books "within whose silent chambers treasure lies, preserved from age to age," by whose means so many have been enabled to preserve the early freshness of their love for the ideal which, according to Hazlitt, consists in "the

heavenly tints of fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the springtide of human life."

## LADIES "ON THE ROAD."

I REMEMBER reading somewhere that the men who first rode velocipedes in London were hooted and mobbed all through the streets; why, Heaven knows, unless that they were daring to do something that had never been done before, and must therefore be unconventional. In the same way lady bicyclists are having a bit of a bad time just now. An American bishop, we are told, declares that they remind him of witches on broomsticks; while from Paris come newspapers vehemently demonstrating that these curious animals, the lady bicyclists, who perambulate the Bois, are, without exception, members of the foreign colony of the French capital. In this country people content themselves pretty much with shrugging their shoulders and declaring that none of theirs shall go and do likewise; which seems a pity, considering from what an extremely pleasant and healthful exercise their girls are being debarred. However, it is to be hoped that all these prejudices will soon have evaporated. Tricycles for ladies have for the last ten or fifteen years been condoned, or, at least, tolerated by most; and before long I believe it cannot fail to be recognised that bicycles, while not one whit more mannish, are infinitely prettier and more graceful than the three-wheelers, besides having a thousand recommendations in their favour from the point of view of economy of labour and strength.

But it is not my mission to preach the two-wheeler. Rather I would draw attention to the pleasures of cycle touring—to be sure, I never tried tricycle touring, but I dare say, with the addition of a few drawbacks, it resembles the two-wheeled machine. By no other mode of travelling can one so thoroughly and so pleasantly become acquainted with the beauties of a country. In pedestrianism, only the very strong can cover enough ground without over-fatigue; in the railway, one covers too much ground without obtaining a definite idea of any single scene, and as for touring on horseback, it is replete with so many worries and responsibilities—equine lame feet, sore backs, and influenzas—that one would a great deal rather be sitting at home at ease.

By this I do not mean to infer that cycle touring is without its difficulties. No; more appropriate would it be to say that,

Only those who brave its dangers  
Comprehend its mysteries.

Luggage disappears, gets jumbled up with other people's in railway parcel-offices, and fails to arrive in time at its hotel destinations. When it is there right and tight, you are not, nor likely to be, having got storm-staid in some village or other twenty miles away. When you are hungry you can never find a shop, or when thirsty a stream, and it is an utter impossibility to discover a smithy when your cycle is in want of a little patching up. But all these are the mere inevitable accompaniments of the journey, the spices which lend a flavour of adventure to expeditions which might otherwise grow prosaically smooth. The main fact is that you can steer yourself with perfect independence through the most charming scenes, can stop to admire or to rest when such is your good pleasure, and can inhale more ozone in a week than your poor town-bound friends have the chance of appropriating to themselves in a whole year.

One of the pleasantest tours I ever made, and one which I could confidently recommend to a couple of lady cyclists, was from Inverness to Gairloch—in other words, across Scotland from sea to sea—a route which embraces some of our finest loch and mountain scenery. The stages ought to be made extremely easy, namely, Strathpeffer, Achnasheen, and Loch Maree; the luggage being sent on in front, in the first two instances by train, and in the last by coach or parcel post.

It was, as far as I remember, about the end of July or the beginning of August that my friend and I set out on this expedition. Waterproof-capes, combs, soap and towels, and a cyclist's touring guide made up the sum of our personal equipments, and our iron steeds were first-class pneumatic safeties.

Along the breezy shores of the Beaulieu Firth, and through a considerable expanse of wooded country, our first day's journey led us. I recollect that we passed by the historical and catholic domain of the Simon Frasers, getting a glimpse of Lord Lovat's seat, Beaufort Castle, from the fact that I had always taken a special interest in that unlucky Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, who was out in the '45, and who, after innumerable ups and downs—and notwith-

standing that he had all the cunning of the Heathen Chinee in his headpiece—landed himself on Tower Hill when upwards of eighty years of age. He was a fat, comical-looking old man, as can be seen by the curious little painting of him in our National Portrait Gallery; and there are many of his odd sayings still related—none more characteristic perhaps than that with which he greeted the crowds assembled at his execution: "God save us," he exclaimed, as he mounted the scaffold, "why should there be such a bustle about taking off an old, grey head, that can't get up three steps without two men to support it?"

Strathpeffer, or "the Strath" as it is called, is worth two or three days' exploiting. I know it of old and all its attractions. In the first place, however, I should say, do not drink the waters without medical sanction. When you hear a doctor's gig rattle by after midnight in Strathpeffer, it is ten to one that somebody has been experimenting on them on his own account. What untold sufferings are entailed thereby I have no notion, as forbidden fruits in the shape of nauseous medicinal fluid are for me void of temptation.

There is a great grassy knoll, you can scarcely call it hill, at one end of Strathpeffer, from which you get a magnificent view of the surrounding country. Knock Farrel is its name; I have seen it in summer literally garlanded with pink and white dog-roses. You climb to the top in order to inspect a vitrified fort—a thing that nobody seems to understand much about—and while you are there you receive an object lesson which gives you a clear understanding on some other points which till then have probably been merely vague designations in your mind. One long sweep of country, for instance, you discern to be marked out in patches after the fashion of a badly drawn chessboard, and in some corner of each of these you will distinguish a tiny thatched hovel. You are looking down on Ross-shire, and these are some of the abodes of the famous Ross-shire crofters. To the east stretches the blue Cromarty Firth, to the west loom the jagged and peaked mountains of Ross-shire. From northwards, Ben Wyvis, in her tarnished glory, looks down upon you shamefacedly; for, whereas she pretended to stand highest amongst Scotch summits, she has now been relegated definitely to a fourth or fifth place amongst them.



More than one loch greets your eyes; and surely, too—unless, as I fear, the Cat's Back comes in the way—the silver streak of Conon River, in the midst of which as likely as not are to be seen men knee-deep, stooping in search of pearl oysters. I have called Knock Farrel a knoll, but after all it is a goodish sized knoll for the people who live in the bleak peat country behind, and who have to toil heavily laden over it—as I have seen them doing—every time they go to fetch in provisions from Ding-wall or the Strath.

We cyclists were very kindly treated—petted, even, I might say—in the little hotel in Strathpeffer at which we put up. Having passed a dreamless night, we were awakened at an early hour by the stirring strains of the bagpipes of the official village-rouser, and soon after we got under weigh for our journey, the whole of the hotel guests coming down to see us off. One good woman, judging probably from my eye-glasses, and the strong-minded nature of our enterprise, had quite settled in her own mind that I was an author.

"You will write an account of the tour for a magazine, will you not?" she whispered insinuatingly, as we walked down the garden in front of the hotel.

"Oh, by all means," I answered recklessly.

Promises of that sort are so easily made.

"And—and, my dear," here her voice dwindled almost to a sigh, "you will be sure, will you not, to—to put me in, too?"

Again recklessly I answered in the affirmative; upon which, with as cordial a hand-shake as if we had been acquainted for years, we parted for ever and a day.

I have no intention of describing here the route from Strathpeffer to Achnasheen—it is all in the guide-books, a great deal better put, I dare say, than I could give it. You make straight for these rugged, towering mountains, summits of which you descried from Knock Farrel. With every mile the scenery gets wilder and grander, and yet you come here and there upon wooded glens, calm, sedgy lochs, gentle waterfalls. The air is intensely exhilarating, laden with the honey-scents of the heather and the pungent fragrance of bog-myrtles, and charged with the music of the pee-weet or lark, of the sparkling, dancing salmon-stream, or the roaring, splashing river.

"Every Highlandman is a gentleman,"

Queen Victoria is reported to have said. We had not gone far over Ross-shire before we discovered that every Highlandman deemed it incumbent on him to doff his bonnet to us, and that if we would not be outdone in the matter of politeness we must at least be prepared to return the greeting. Very picturesque the shepherds looked with their plaids, crooks, and broad bonnets, and their wonderfully intelligent companions, the collies, trotting at their heels, or doing their behests amongst the sheep up the far-distant mountain-sides. How many words these faithful followers carry in the vocabulary of their understandings I cannot tell, but I should think a good many, and all Gaelic, of course. I remember being much amused once in New Zealand at a complication which arose on a large station, over the question of Highland and Lowland dogs. Some half-dozen of the shepherds—true Celts who had never forsaken their mother tongue—were leaving for Scotland, and their dogs, highly trained, valuable animals belonging to the squatter, were handed over to the incoming shepherds, who, as it happened, were every one of them Anglo-Saxons. But when it came to work, it was found that the poor collies, with the best will in the world, could not manage to understand their new masters, the Gaelic being the only tongue they knew, and English to them a foreign language.

Another discovery—and not so pleasant a one—which we made as we penetrated farther and farther into the Highlands, was that we had come upon a region in which horses and bicycles had not yet made acquaintance, and where the sheen of our steel bearings bade fair to despatch whole waggonfuls of our fellow-creatures over the nearest handy precipices.

At Achnasheen—of which I shall say nothing except that its name, "Field of Rain," is an appropriate one—we spent most of our evening in a vain attempt to master, under instructions from a table-maid, the pronunciation of Loch Rosque—which comes out something like Achroisg—having failed to arrive at an understanding with the one shopkeeper about the purchase of a newspaper. Our "Ciamar tha thus" produced all sorts of commodities from pipe-clay to fishing hooks, but not a vestige of printed matter. One of the aborigines—a pretty, dark-eyed boy, apparently about fourteen years of age—I did hear making use of the English at one hotel; and the soft prolonged sibilance of

the tones, combined with the burden of their meaning, haunted me for many a day after. He was standing at the hotel bar at the time, and the words he hissed out were these: "A glass of whis-s-s-ky," and again, "A gla-a-ass of whis-ky."

As we were leaving Achnasheen we passed two captive eagles gazing through iron bars out upon their beloved mountain fastnesses. Motionless, solitary, disdainful, they seemed to us the incarnation of hopelessness and proud despair; while in sharp contrast a roe deer bounded wild and free along the loch-side in front of us.

But I shall not be so rash as to drift into a description of this day's route either. The view from Glen Docherty down upon Loch Maree is one that, once seen, is not likely to be forgotten; and the loch shores themselves, now all sylvan beauty—tangles of silver birch, mountain ash, and stately fir—and again fiercely, ruggedly wild, sheer down weather-beaten precipices and foaming torrents, make an indelible impression on the memories of all who have visited them.

When we put up at Talladale, half-way along the loch, we found ourselves merged in an entirely new order of beings. The frequenters of this hotel might be described as a kind of amphibious animals. The greater part of their day was spent in boats with ghillies; and what time they passed on shore was consecrated to the contemplation of their own or their rivals' plates of trout, and the planning of further campaigns. Just as in Shepherd's at Cairo one must talk Egyptology or nothing, so here one was nowhere without a knowledge of rod fishing. The hero of the evening, indeed, was the man who had caught the largest trout, and to his words of wisdom we all listened with gaping mouths.

I must not forget, however, that one man—a brawny Anglo-Indian Colonel, who, with his five-foot-eleven wife, had had one of the best catches of the day—made a valiant attempt at dinner-time to put aside for the nonce the eternal angling jargon. As he helped himself to haggis—a dish which in the Scotland of to-day is prepared only for the English visitors—he made the announcement that he had seen that afternoon a couple of magpies, "and two of these mean grief, unfortunately."

"To be sure," said a lady by his side. "One joy, two grief."

"Yes, and do you know," continued the Colonel, "I have always had an eerie

feeling about that, on account of what once happened to my father. It was when he was quite a young man. He was travelling through Devonshire on a coach, and as they went along a magpie happened to alight on the road in front. 'One joy,' said a passenger. But immediately somebody else shouted, 'Two grief,' and another, 'Three a wedding.' Then just as a fourth bird appeared and my father had 'Four death' on his lips, with a tremendous crash down toppled the coach over the side of a little wooden bridge they were crossing, and the poor beggar of a driver had his neck broken."

There was a momentary pause when the Colonel had done speaking, then:

"Just so," exclaimed a little drily the man who had hooked the finest trout, "the fellow had been paying too much attention to the magpies and not enough to his horses' heads probably," and with that he commenced again upon the question of dressing fly hooks.

But the gallant Colonel was not to be discouraged. A little later, somebody having disdainfully rejected a mayonnaise because the lobster had been tinned, he opened out in the defence of tinned meats generally.

"In India," he said, "we consider them as luxuries. If one can afford to buy things tinned, one may be independent of the native markets altogether. Why, a man with his house full of tinned meats is thought to be simply in clover out there. Green peas, American pears, oatmeal, German sausages, there is nothing you need be without. I remember an amusing story about a country-bred lady, that shows you exactly what tinned meats are to the Anglo-Indians. You know what country-bred means, don't you? People born in India, and of English or European parents, who—through want of cash—have never been sent home, but have been educated at hill-stations, in convents, or something of the sort.

"It's a queer thing, but these country-breds have often the oddest notions about things. The lady I am thinking of was dining one day in company with the wife of a member of the Supreme Council, a 'burra mem,' who had just returned from a visit home.

"And you dined with the Queen?" asked the country-bred, breathless with excitement.

"Yes."

"At Balmoral?"

"'Yes, at Balmora!'"

"Then, waving her little jewelled fingers"—and here the Colonel extended to right and left his own great brown paws, distorting at the same time his sternly handsome countenance into a sad misrepresentation of a woman's simper:

"'Ah!' she cried with certainty. 'Ah, everything there in tin, I presume!'"

I am sorry to have to end up the account of our tour with anything so humiliating, but truth compels me to state that when we reached Gairloch on this occasion we had very much the appearance of a couple of drowned rats. The fact is, the whole blame of it rested with my companion. At the outset she had dubbed her bicycle—which was a new one—with the inauspicious name of Kelpie, in spite of my protests—supported by such quotations as:

The Kelpy has risen from the fathomless pool,  
He has lighted his candle of death and of dool;

and

Hark! heard ye the Kelpy reply as we passed?  
God's blessing on the warder, he locked the  
bridge fast!

All that come to my cove are sunk,  
Priest or layman, lover or monk!—

that Kelpies were nasty, vicious creatures who went in solely for drowning human beings. And as, on account of my extra carefulness all along the line, Kelpie had failed to duck us in the lochs, or throw us over a bridge—a thing he was not far off doing, by the way, at the Grudie—he had taken the mean revenge of running us fair into the centre of a thunderstorm and drowning us with rain-water instead.

## A TRIP TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN.

TAKING into consideration the vast numbers of globe-trotters who annually spread themselves over the surface of the earth, it is a subject for regret how so few find their way to the land of the Ice King.

If it were possible to purchase a Cook's ticket, doubtless more would see the advisability of going North, but under the existing conditions, even if a person should desire to brace himself, or herself, into new life by inhaling for a few weeks the unequalled air of the Ice-bound sea, the opportunities of doing so are so few that the ratio is likely to remain as it stands.

To read of the ozone breezes of the Arctic Ocean is to smell health, though afar off, and so, perhaps, there are a

few who will gladly follow me to the Frost King's realm, and sniff in imagination the purest ether that our world can boast of.

The seventh of April was the day on which the steam-whaler "W——" was expected to lift her anchor, and set sail for the Arctic Circle. It was to be my first voyage on the salt sea, and, as I was to sail on board in the capacity of surgeon, little wonder that my youthful fancy pictured what reality seldom equals.

The day arrived, but a fierce north wind had risen, and for ten dragging days I wandered through the dreary streets of Peterhead, paced the quay, and listened in the low-roofed fo'c's'le to the imaginative yarns of an old Greenland salt.

With his imagination and my own fervid one, by the end of these ten days, a cruise on an Arctic whaler was nothing less, to my mind, than one of the expected delights of Paradise.

On the morning of the seventeenth all was bustle and confusion, and by the afternoon we had bidden farewell, we had left the crowded quay, and the old ship "W——," with her 'sprit to the north, was steaming steadily, though slowly, to the land of expectation.

The sea was calm, but there was a long, smooth swell rolling on to us, in which the ship sank and rose with the gracefulness of a sea-bird. For two hours I walked the quarter-deck, pitching hither and thither at the mercy of the waves, and forcing myself and the grinning helmsman to believe that I was appreciating the graceful bearing of the vessel. But nature will assert itself, and somehow the motion lost its charm, so I crept below to my narrow bunk, and Paradise was veiled.

Next morning my nose was assailed with the strong odour of ship's coffee and fried ham, and on looking out I discovered the two mates and the engineer engaged in a very businesslike manner. "What stomachs they have!" I thought to myself, and then turned away with a sudden shudder.

Thirty-six hours from the time we started the anchor was run out, and we lay motionless in the harbour of Lerwick, surrounded by a circle of screaming sea-gulls; and from that hour I could drain ship's coffee and eat fried ham with the best of them, and continued to do so till the end.

Fifteen Shetland seamen came aboard,



and these made up our complement of sixty all told. Mere lads were the most of these islanders, but tall, healthy, robust fellows, with honest, smiling, eager faces.

Several "fitting out" merchants also visited us, with great bundles of Shetland mittens, and long strings of sea-boots, which they piled on the deck and proceeded to dispose of to all comers.

The sea-boots were not in my line, but it is necessary for each man on board to have in his possession some six pairs of mittens. A Shetland mitten is a distinctly special product of the island. It is upwards of twelve inches long from the thumb to the tip, and adds a peculiar element of comedy to the wearer, when first seen.

When the merchants had been disposed of, and the pilot was aboard, we again raised the anchor to a swelling chorus, and left the last of civilisation until we anchored, five months later, in the same spacious harbour.

I stood long on the poop, and watched the rocky cliffs of the treeless island sinking, sinking beneath the sea.

Iceland, of Viking memory and the home of the *Saga*, we saw as a dim shadow on the horizon. And, then, shall I ever forget that eventful morning, when I rose to find myself, for the first time, amid a field of ice!

I rushed to the bridge, and gazed over the strange scene. It was like a dream of fairyland, so new, so fair, so peaceful. Not a cloud, nor the faintest shadow of one, dimmed the sky. The sun shone from the blue dome with a dazzling glory. The sea lay like a vast mirror, save where it washed with a soft plash on the thousands of floating snow-crowned ice-blocks, glittering in green, and blue, and silver, as they rose and sank on the almost imperceptible swell. Hundreds of white wings swept ceaselessly around us, trailing long shadows behind them, or chasing those before them, over the glassy surface of the ocean.

Away on the port bow was a black speck. Nearer and nearer we approached it, threading our way through the gleaming ice-pack, and leaving a long wake behind us, dotted with our noisy companions the "mollies," and outlined by the hovering snow-birds.

It was a seal, a beautiful soft-eyed creature, basking in the warm rays of the sun. As the dark hull of the ship pressed on its vision it lifted its head and regarded us with a curious stare, but without fear,

for we passed quite close to it—in fact, struck a corner of the very block on which it was resting.

A harpooner fired from the chains and killed it; and in the space of three minutes a boat was lowered, the seal was "flinched," the men were aboard again, and we were off. This was the first example I had had of the dexterity required and exhibited on board a whaler.

The men were in high spirits at this trifling success, which they regard with such superstitious belief. For if the first seal is secured, it is a full voyage in their eyes, but should it escape, then an empty ship is next thing to a certainty, and every old salt will make it an unhappy period for the young hands.

I looked back, and could not help shuddering as my eyes rested on the mangled carcase of the poor seal, then surrounded by a vast cloud of birds, rising and falling, bursting and combining again like the long columns of gnats above our own streams.

Great Arctic gulls, fierce burgomasters, and determined mollies in one confused, fighting, and screaming mass, tearing the "krang" (flesh) from the yet quivering corpse with their curved beaks; flapping at, striking at, and tumbling with each other in savage contest, to rise among the stooping terns and snow-birds, spattered and crimsoned from the affray.

The wind fell, and for two days a dark trail of smoke in the cloudless sky marked our passage.

And now we are out of the ice-pack and into the open sea once more; not gliding over a shimmering surface, but rolling helplessly in a long side swell, the propeller at times churning up the water into foam, and anon whirring in space.

A line of bobbing black heads, crossing our course—resembling the buoys of a herring-net—caught my eye. Another line and another followed, some irregular, and some in perfect formation. These were seals migrating for their annual general assembly to a certain point of ice fixed in the mind of each in some mysterious manner.

To find this point is of the first importance to a sealer, and to do so he endeavours to cross the track of the seals. It seems scarcely credible, but it is none the less true, that every seal knows the exact point where they are to collect, and where they do collect in their millions from all parts of the Arctic Ocean.

I communicated my news to the first mate, as I well knew what we were looking for, but he had already informed the captain. Their track having been notified, our course was altered, and for two hundred miles we followed their line, blindly relying on their instinct to be at last successful.

Some days afterwards, when I was seated at the bow, the smoke of a steamer was perceived on the horizon. All eyes were turned on the dull streak. She was turning about in a most suspicious manner, and surmising was at its height when the spectioneer sang out from the crow's nest that she was picking up seals. Loud were the maledictions from the fo'c's'le. "Full steam ahead," was the order from the bridge, and next minute the engines were at it in earnest, and the fireman was heard slamming to the iron doors as he fed the slumbering fires.

It was one o'clock on the twenty-ninth of April when we steamed into a peninsula of ice, where we had marked the steamer, and found we were just too late. Nothing remained for us but certain evidence of the success of our rival, whom we could see steaming at full speed to the eastward, hoping to fall across another "patch" in that quarter of the "point."

What a horrible picture she had left to us—a ghastly field of death and butchery. On all sides mutilated carcasses grinned at us amid the blood-stained snow—an awful evidence of the presence of man; of the wants of civilisation, and of how these are satisfied.

Our friend had gone to the east, so we steered to the west, with an empty ship but with hopeful hearts. We had not pushed far when it was evident by the orders from the crow's nest that seals were in sight. And, sure enough, there they were, forming a clean-cut, black line on the horizon.

Nearer and nearer we crept to the vast army, stretching in its millions around us as far as the eye could reach, lying like the shadow of a stupendous thunder-cloud on the face of the ice-field.

I had seen the wild ducks feeding on the marshes; I had seen the dotted sheep on the hillsides of Braemar; but here was life as I had never seen it—units in their millions gathered from all parts of the Arctic Ocean to one centre.

Within a quarter of a mile of the nearest patch, the engines were stopped, and all hands, with the exception of the

captain and half-a-dozen men, left the ship and took their way towards the seals.

The two mates, the spectioneer, three harpooners, and myself carried firearms in the form of Martini-Henry and Expresses. One man with a boat-hook attended each rifle to assist him in case of accidents, while the rest of the crew followed in groups, "flinched" the seals that were shot, and towed the skins into heaps ready for the ship when she proceeded to pick them up.

What could I not relate of this day of all days to a sealer! How many pages could I not fill did I dare to recall the danger, the excitement of that one day on the ice; how we had to spring from block to block across the open sea; how the ice gave beneath me; how I fell in; how I left the rest in my foolish eagerness; how I crept up to the sleeping seals, rifle in hand, like a murderer that I was; how the mist came down; how I did not notice the hoisting of the Jack; and, lastly, how I got lost for my pains, and lay down beside a poor seal I had shot.

Five hundred "saddle-backs" fell to our rifles. The skins were piled in a huge heap on deck, after which came the "making off"—separating the blubber from the skin—and when the deck was partly cleared, we once more set sail, leaving behind us a grim history written on the snow.

For a month we searched the bays and indentures of the ice-field in a vain quest for leviathan. And once we attempted to steam through a large sheet of "bay-ice"—ice found during the spring—and failed. There was a heavy swell running outside in the open, which jammed it in on us, causing us to experience what among heavier ice would have been the much feared "nip." As it was, our efforts to keep it apart from us by ice-anchors and wire cables proved useless, the latter bursting asunder in a most dangerous manner.

Around us reared confused, heightening masses of crushed ice-blocks, and from below came a thunderous sound of grating, grinding, and crushing.

The captain grew alarmed for the safety of the rudder, so the ice-saws and axes were produced, and the men and myself set to work with a will to cut a passage for the ship.

We lay two hundred yards from open water, which, however, was fast packing up. We cut from the open towards the

ship, and ran out the pieces with long poles and boat-hooks as they were severed. It was disheartening work, for almost as fast as we cut our way the edges closed again. We persevered, and at last succeeded, yet it took fifty men sixteen hours to cut that passage, and when the ship did steam ahead there was not an inch to spare on either side.

The sheets of bay-ice kept us out of the field; as nothing could be done under the circumstances but wait for the heat of summer to help us, we steered south in the direction of an island called Jan Mayne, latitude seventy-one degrees.

Here, on the fifteenth of June, we fell in with a pack of what are commonly known among sailors as "Bladders"—because of a peculiar bladder-like structure they carry on the front of the head—but more correctly named crested seal, for the same reason. This is the largest species in the Arctic, if we except the ground seal, which is very rare.

They differ from the common "saddle-back" in shunning the young flat ice as a summer resort, and in having a distinct preference for the highest and oldest to be found. I have seen a "bladder" looking down at me from an edge of ice twenty feet and even more above the sea, and it is a common occurrence to find yourself up to the neck in soft snow, or in a snow water lake, when you venture to seek your victim.

This was another day never to be forgotten. It was all boating. Shall I ever forget how the sun shone on that fifteenth of June; the cloudless sky; the blue, blue ocean; the great snow-clad ice-blocks, floating grand and massive in their perfect whiteness, pinnaced, columned, and curved, bearing on their snowy bosoms thousands of tiny, gleaming lakes of pure fresh water?

Three hundred skins covered the deck, measuring, on an average, eight to ten feet; so, well satisfied with our sealing, we again turned northward in search of the whale.

The sun had helped us, and the bay-ice had gone, so we entered at a great harbour where the ice, not being beaten into a solid barrier by the swell, admitted of a passage.

We steamed straight in, for the season was advancing on us, and the captain had come to the conclusion that the whales were well inside if they were anywhere.

Gradually the sea became greener and gluey, owing to the presence of vast quantities

of animalcula called whales' food. The presence of this, and what is termed "spoutings," raised the hopes of all to a high pitch; but alas, alas!

In we steamed, farther and farther, now gliding over unruffled inland lakes, now fixing our ice-anchors to the lee of some gigantic floe when the Storm King reigned, or lying by in some lovely "bight," where the great creature we were in search of might be expected to sport itself.

At times a narwhal was secured by a watchful boat's crew as they lay in wait by the floe edge, and many a "floe-rat"—a small seal—fell a victim to the bullet as it swam or bobbed curiously around the ship.

We were then little more than fifty miles from Greenland. It is seldom that a ship can penetrate so near to land, but the "set" of the ice was in our favour. Its great peaked mountains rose before us in all their blue splendour, with one summit—called the Church—towering conspicuously above its fellows. There was a delicious warmth in the breeze that blew off it, and what sailors call a "land heat" in the air. One man professed to have been there, and he yarned to me on the forepeak of the diamonds, the gold, the bears, the deer, the white hares, the white foxes, the ptarmigan, the cranberries, and the blueberries to be found there.

When I thought of the diamonds I turned to my companion and enquired how it happened he was not a millionaire, and he gave me to understand that just as he was stooping to fill his pockets, "a darned, meddlin', interferin' crittur o' a bar" wanted to go halves with him.

We were so near land, and as the ice seemed fairly loose, the captain thought he would try and force a passage through the famous Lancaster Sound, and get to the west of Greenland. This attempt, however, only brought us to within forty miles of the land, where a close line of ice hemmed it in. It was quite impossible to attain our wish in any fashion, so we steamed slowly along without the prescribed limit.

A bear was seen wandering aimlessly about the ice. We burnt some bones in the cook's fire, which it instantly scented and replied to by shambling towards us. I had the pleasure of shooting it, and it rewarded me with a good skin.

Great flocks of smaller guillemots—little auks, the sailors call them—swept past us to their feeding grounds, and when we "lay to" in an open stretch, they surrounded



the ship like bees round a hive, making a purring sort of noise very pleasant to listen to, and carrying a small wave of water before them as they dived, and scrambled, and flapped their little fin-like wings.

The captain brought out his shot-gun and killed three score of them with a few discharges. We picked them up in a boat, and when skinned, stewed, and made into a pie, these little birds proved a great delicacy. And remember, reader, that I was not starved. When we left Scotland we took with us a bullock, a pig, and a sheep. They were braced to the masts, where they froze, and for five months supplied the cabin with fresh meat.

Until the end of August we sailed hither and thither in a fruitless search for whalebone, and then, as night showed symptoms of approaching, and bay-ice was already forming, the captain took the alarm and ordered "full speed ahead."

And, truly, it was not too soon, for the eager Frost King was only waiting for the sinking of the sun to breathe on the sea and close the gates for nine long months.

But in time—though only just in time—we reached the open sea, and then, with all sail set to a favouring breeze, and the engines at "full speed," we rushed from the solitudes of snow and ice to the shores of our own loved isle, forgetting the pleasures of the past in the thoughts of the future, in the joyful expectation of a glad reunion with the dear ones we had left behind.

### A FURNISHED HOUSE.

IT is becoming every year more the fashion for sportsmen out for a holiday to entertain the less fortunate portion of the human race, which is forced to sport vicariously, with narratives of their prowers and adventures. Formerly it was held seemly to keep silence unless a man should be in a position to tell how he had shot bears in the Rockies, or musk-oxen in Canada, or alligators in Queensland, or done some sporting deed of like importance; but nowadays, when picturesqueness or eccentricity of style looms so large as a factor in every sort of screeed, the slaughter of ten brace of partridges by Johnson in East Anglia, or the capture of a dozen trout by Thompson in a Highland loch, are held to be pegs substantial enough whereon to hang a sporting article, more or less weighty; Thompson and Johnson, be it observed, being fully

persuaded that they have a style at command which would be capable of illuminating a theme much denser and less attractive.

There is another form of sport much affected every summer by respectable middle-class men, fathers of families, who could no more handle a rod or a gun than they could navigate the Channel fleet, and this is the hunt for that furnished house in the country, in which they may spend their six weeks or two months of holiday, having had enough for the present of the humours of English watering-places, and of Scotch and Continental routes of organised travel. When once it has been settled in the family council that "country house" is the watchword for the coming summer, the agent's list is sent for, and the first perusal of this is a veritable peep into a paradise of rural joys.

In reading the detailed excellencies of the various houses in the market, one is brought to a mental state something like that of a cat in a tripe shop: one does not know which tempting treasure to fix upon. As one runs the eye over the varied benefits which are offered in exchange for the stipulated number of guineas per week, one is amazed that the lucky owners of all these good things can bring themselves to part with them, for mere lucre, to alien Londoners. How can the possessors of shady tennis lawns, well-matured grounds, productive kitchen gardens, and cows and fowls in full profit, make up their minds to abjure the enjoyment of them at the season when life in the country—given fine weather—is a dream of lazy beatitude, and betake themselves to join the travelling ruck in foreign lands, or, worse still, to spend weary days in a fly-blown lodging-house on the shadeless sea-front of an English watering-place?

It is not until the sportsman paterfamilias sets forth some fine morning with a selection of "orders to view" in his pocket, that he will realise that the quarry he is in search of is one not to be stalked at the first attempt. Of all the descriptions he has read, there is not one which has taken his fancy so strongly as that of the Limes, and thither accordingly he first turns his steps.

"Dear me, can this be the Limes?" he exclaims, as he runs through a rickety entrance gateway, down a weed-grown drive, and finally stops before a blistered, weather-stained house, fronted by a lawn

which might have been cut the week before last, and littered with the whole summer's debris. The house, though old in design, is new in construction, and is one of those ill-starred ones built with unseasoned timber and untempered mortar. No present care would ever make it cosy, nor would it ever grow venerable by lapse of time. But the owner, as he takes you round, assures you that it is one of the most comfortable houses in England; that he has let it to the same family for four years in succession. The tennis lawn merely wants a little rolling, and though you have to stand on the gravel path to serve, and may be driven occasionally into the potato ground to reach a ball placed well back, there are very few tennis courts in that part of the country to compare with it. The cows, unluckily, are both gone dry, but the produce of the poultry will be yours on condition that you provide the food, a contract which will probably yield you but moderate profit, seeing that the yard is filled chiefly with long-legged young cockerels, who look as if they might be gifted with healthy appetites.

The early potatoes and the peas are almost finished, and the apples, the only other garden produce visible, are of an uncompromising greenish hue, and look as if they might be fit for use some time next spring. You are naturally a little disappointed that, in the event of your taking the place, you will still need the services of the greengrocer, but the proprietor, by way of consolation, waves his hand benignantly over a dozen gooseberry and currant bushes, innocent of the tiniest berry, and assures you that all the bush fruit on the place will be yours.

The hunter will come across Poplars, and Elms, and Cedars, all first cousins to the Limes, and he will soon come to the conclusion that the compilers of house agents' lists are past masters in the art of ingeniously misrepresenting. I have gone through it all myself, and, moreover, I have before this been beguiled into hiring a house which I knew was an imposture, and suffering the penalties due to my folly. But this year I have fallen upon my feet, and have secured the very place I want at a moderate rent, a place which turns out to be more desirable even than its owner declared. My friends, as a rule, assert I am the luckiest of mortals to have got hold of such a treasure; but in spite of this, as I sit after breakfast—that meal, I must mention, was graced with eggs and straw-

berries and cream, all produced on the domain—under the verandah, and gaze over the gay, sunlit garden, I feel that the pursuit of content in a furnished house is an unavailing one. If a serpent has crept into this paradise, whither shall I flee? Will it not be better to retire to the back regions of my house in — Street, and take my holiday in shirt-sleeves and carpet slippers, saving meantime the wages of the caretaker?

In outward seeming my present trouble might well be set down as a chimera. Seeing that the proprietor was most anxious to secure me as a tenant, that I have paid half my rent in advance, and am under legal obligation to pay the balance before vacating my temporary abode; seeing that I consume only such amount of garden stuff as I require for my own household, and never send off surreptitious baskets of it to my gardenless friends in town—a practice not uncommon, I am told, with people in my present case—and that, speaking generally, I and all my belongings are fully as careful of my landlord's goods and chattels as we are of our own, I do not suppose there can be any special reason why I should liken myself to the cuckoo in the song-bird's nest; but free as I may be in spirit of the felonious attributes of the "blithe new-comer," I cannot shake off the notion that, taken literally, I am in my present surroundings just as arrant an intruder as he is, a harmless, law-abiding intruder if you will, but an intruder all the same.

My present landlord has never let his house before, consequently both he himself and the furniture around me are new to the business, hence probably the satisfactory nature of my hire. As I have already hinted, I have had large experience of furnished houses, and how one feels as the dweller in another man's nest. This experience has led me to formulate a belief as to the sentience and individuality of articles of furniture which come into most immediate contact with their owners; not going so far, however, as to elevate them to the dignity of transmitters of communications from another sphere. Somehow this fancy has never struck me so strongly as in my present surroundings, and I have an uneasy suspicion that I may be forcing my company where I am not wanted, a suspicion which has never troubled me when I have been surrounded by what I may call professional furniture, the furniture one meets in hotels, or lodging-houses,

or in those south country rectories and vicarages which of late have come so largely into competition with the above. All of this, from the base usage to which it has been put for so many seasons, must differ entirely from the furniture of a well-ordered home, like that which I now see around me, just as the waiter and the job-horse differ from their congeners in private service. They must deteriorate morally before the nap has lost its first freshness, or the varnish been defaced by a single scratch.

The first evening of my sojourn here, impressed no doubt by the spirit of the surroundings, I put myself in my landlord's place, and conjured up the vision of some other man sitting in my own easy-chair, and walking over my own Oriental rugs. I felt that my cherished belongings would take it as an injury. I credited them forthwith with faculties such as no weaver or cabinet-maker could ever have put into them, making them thus participants, in a measure, in my own idiosyncrasies. I take it that most men manage to impress marks of their own individuality on their immediate surroundings, and I often wonder how it is that those curious investigators in the byways of being have not set to work to describe character, or even to foretell the future, from the aspect of a man's household belongings. Commonplace people would say that the data here available are just as trustworthy as those supplied by the bumps on his head or the creases in the palms of his hand.

I have no personal knowledge of my landlord or of any of his family, but after a fortnight spent in their home, I seem to know them indirectly. To judge from his title, the head of the house may have seen active service as a man of arms in past years; and the trim neatness of the place, outside and in, proclaims that he must have been a smart officer, and brought his orderly tastes into retirement. The house is well furnished, but there are no superfluities, as if the idea of having to strike tents in a hurry and move on to fresh ground had always been present.

The pictures on the walls of the Captain's snuggerly balanced each other perfectly; his writing-table, when I first sat down to it, was a model of neatness, and, though, since I have been here I have done my best to provoke around me the litter which at home follows my advent in any part of the house as surely as dawn

follows sunset, I cannot manage it. I may put the Captain's inkstand and his paper-weights away, and shift every chair out of its allotted place, but they do not on this account produce an effect of natural disarray. My own surroundings have grown by long usage hopelessly demoralised and down at heel, and seem to delight in their disrespectability, but the Captain's household effects rather resemble respectable middle-aged gentlemen constrained to put on raffish Bohemian ways of which they thoroughly disapprove. There is a mute reproach in their involuntary disorder which I cannot bear. It disturbs me more even than the prim symmetry in which I found them, and to which they are evidently pining to return; so I restore them to their well-balanced rectangular alignment, and sit straight in their midst as if I were the Captain himself, and even fancy that I am, *pro tem.*, endowed with a certain military stiffness.

But it is not in the Captain's snuggerly that I feel most like a cuckoo. There is a tiny apartment, half bower, half conservatory, at the end of the house, and in this I have more than once attempted to smoke my after-lunch pipe, and to spend over a novel what is in an ordinary way the pleasantest hour in the whole four-and-twenty, but I felt that every whiff I blew out was an outrage, though my landlord had bidden me to smoke wherever I would, as he did himself; indeed, the first time I entered it I certainly did smell tobacco, but I could not bring myself to intensify this aroma, even by the choicest Egyptian.

Delicate water-colours and etchings hung on the walls, and ornaments and nick-nacks of the prettiest stood about everywhere. Since I have been in residence, hints have come to my ears that the Captain was induced by the "*res angusta*"—taking the form of the cessation of Irish rents—to let his house this summer, and now as I look round at this pretty little boudoir, furnished with such care and good taste for his wife and the charming *berry* of girls whose photographs at various stages of growth adorn the walls, I realise what a pang it must have been to them all to turn out of this pretty home, just at the season when it was best worth living in, and feel that I was acting the part of a niggardly brute when I delivered my ultimatum to the agent, and declared I must have the Captain's domain for pounds instead of guineas.



I should not like to turn over my study with its well-worn furniture, its engravings and drawings, which are valuable rather from association than from any inherent merit, and its modest assortment of books, including certain rare first editions and volumes out of print, to any stranger for whose respectability I had no better guarantee than the Captain has for mine; but this would be a light sacrifice compared with the one which must have been made with respect to the little boudoir. To have to let such an apartment for hire seems almost as great a domestic tragedy as having to sell the odds and ends from the old home, or one's school and college prizes.

I find I am becoming somewhat sentimental and inclined to moral on the times, so I take my hat and stroll out into the garden by way of seeking a fresh subject for meditation; but whichever way I turn, I meet fresh proofs and warnings that I am an intrusive presence. I see the gardener bound for the kitchen with a basket of prime potatoes, the seed of which, I believe, my Cincinnatus landlord planted with his own hand. I hear the suggestive cackling of the hens; and, regardless of the parasites I may acquire, I go and search for the morning's eggs; and, as I issue forth with a dozen or so lovely ones, I feel my cuckoo status still more acutely. I am half inclined to invite the Captain and all his family to come and stay with us for the rest of our term, so as to lessen the feeling that I am consuming a heritage in which I have no just part.

At the present time I regard the Captain as the victim of the cruellest of fates. Had I once succeeded in raising a potato, or in nurturing a hen to the egg-laying stage, I should have felt ruin itself little worse than the abandonment of these home-grown delicacies to a stranger. I only hope that I may be in as charitable a mood towards the Captain after our final account has been adjusted.

My friend Thompson who was here last week gave me some details of his own experience of taking furnished houses which were, to put it moderately, a little disquieting: stories of whole closets full of cracked plates and cups produced at the last moment as candidates for compensation, of cupboard doors gone slightly wrong and necessitating a builder's estimate to put them straight, and of grease spots on every carpet and rug in the house. According to

Thompson, those hires which begin well are almost sure to end badly. He declares, too, that my conception of the Captain is entirely ideal, and that most likely I shall have to settle a bill for dilapidations which will astonish me. Thompson has given up taking furnished houses, and prefers to stay with people who do. He goes on to say that, whenever he is compelled to entertain himself, he finds it more economical to engage a first floor suite of rooms in the grandest of seaside grand hotels. But Thompson always was a pessimist.

## THE ETERNAL PAST.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER IV.

"WELL, I can live as long as I like with an easy conscience now you are provided for," said Mrs. Deane.

"Please be pleased for a better reason."

"I am pleased for a great many reasons. You have proved yourself a success, that's one. All your people and mine had set you down for an old maid, and we shall have the laugh over them—that's another."

Hilary winced; she would rather have ignored these reasons.

"But you like him?" she said.

"Of course, who wouldn't? He is such a handsome, well-bred young man. He will always be a credit to us. He looks so clean, and well-groomed, and young."

They were breakfasting in the garden as usual. The gate clicked, and Charlie came down the path. He looked as if he had come on purpose to emphasize Mrs. Deane's description of him. The old woman's face glowed with pleasure at the sight of him.

"Dear boy! Hilary, you're a lucky girl, and I'm overjoyed," she said. "Shall I go in? Will he want to kiss you?"

Hilary was appeased. The heart of the hardest, bitterest old woman—cold as stone to her own sex—will warm and soften over the love of a beautiful boy. Hilary was glad to find how content she was that her grandmother's sympathy should waken more for Charlie than it had done for herself.

"Don't go in till he has told you formally," she said. "He will wait for that, he is so well-behaved."

But she was mistaken; he kissed her in the presence of Mrs. Deane—with a

gorgeous air of matter-of-fact right—and Hilary found this kiss even pleasanter than the soft kisses of the night before. There was so much proprietorship in it—it made her feel a child—and she was glad to belong to him. No one had cared to appropriate her for so long.

"She has told you, of course?" Charlie was saying to Mrs. Deane.

"She was just telling me," the old lady answered, with frank delight in his young self-possession. "You might have waited till you had my consent before you took such absolute possession of my grandchild, don't you think?"

"Why, you knew all the while, didn't you?" he asked innocently. "I thought you did, you know. You helped me so nicely." Then, as the old lady just looked in his handsome face and laughed, he added: "I was so much obliged to you."

He sat down at the breakfast-table beside Hilary, and went on talking. He wanted to make plans, and there wasn't much time for making them. He wanted Mrs. Deane and Hilary to go to Algiers for the winter; that would be such a charming arrangement. They were going abroad, in any case. Why not to Algiers? He was bound to go there himself, and he couldn't possibly go without Hilary. He was sure Mrs. Deane would like Algiers.

Mrs. Deane said she would do whatever the young people liked, and left them to settle their plans together.

"How nice she is," said Charlie, pulling his chair a little further into the sunshine. "You won't mind coming to Algiers, Hilary?"

"I think I shall like it."

"I want you to see my mother. You won't mind going to her, will you? She couldn't come to you, because she doesn't like England in the winter; and winter is pretty near now."

"It would be rather far for her to come to pay a call. Besides, it is quite right that I should go to her."

"I didn't know but what you might want to stand on your dignity. Most girls think a mother-in-law a natural enemy. Nan does. Joe's mother wrote to her, and talked about 'my son's choice.' Nan said it made her feel as if all the girls had knelt in a ring, and Joe had stood in the middle and looked round, and beckoned to her, and she had got up and rushed at him. You must not feel like that with my mother. You need not

stand on your dignity with her. She is charming. You will love her."

"You are like your mother, are you not?"

"Yes," he said, flushing a little. "More like than the rest—in appearance, that is. She is very gentle and unselfish. I am afraid we all bully her sometimes, we are such healthy brutes. You will get on with her."

"I am sure I shall," she said, and she was sure of it because she knew that though a good and wise mother often idealises a worthless son, a good boy's belief in his mother is never misleading—knowing him you can almost know her. "I shall love her very much," Hilary continued. "I wish I were as sure that she would love me."

"Oh, she will, I know."

"I hope so."

"Of course she will. Why not?"

If Hilary had spoken the truth she would have said: "Because she will see through me, Catrin's natural remedies, my own pretence of lightheartedness, and all. She will know I am old and sad, and that you are not my first love. Every mother likes a very young girl for her son's wife. Some one who will be his devotee rather than his friend. She is less of a rival."

"Your mother has always loved you more than all the others," she said. "You are her dearest treasure."

"That is why she will love you," he said simply. "I am so glad you are not too proud to go to her, because I would not go if you didn't, and she expects me. You don't mind, do you, that I am so anxious not to disappoint her? I will write to-day and say that we are going out together."

"Here are your sisters," said Hilary.

"They are come to tell you how pleased they are. I told them last night."

And he went off to write his letter.

The girls were pleased, or at any rate sympathetic. Their very praises of their brother sounded more like tribute to her good taste than the traditional exhortation to "be worthy." They hoped she would not mind spending the winters in Algiers. Charlie always went because of mother. "Charlie is mother's favourite, you know. He is the only one of us who takes after her. He is the only one who reads, or thinks, or talks to mother about the things she cares for. If one of us went to her instead of him she would be pleased at

the attention, but she wouldn't enjoy the visit."

"Still, it would be hard on Hilary to give up the season every year."

"Should we have had any season if we didn't go to Algiers?" asked Hilary, laughing.

"Oh, yes, when you are married. Didn't you know that Charles was rich—rich compared to the rest of us, that is?"

"No, I didn't know that."

"Well, don't look so disappointed, but he is. He had money left him. That's how he and mother can afford to live in Algiers. We couldn't all afford to idle through the whole winter. We go in turns. Nan would have gone this year if she hadn't been engaged, but mother likes Charles best."

"I think you have been quite wise, though Charles is my brother," said Nan. "I don't approve of marrying, myself—I did my best to keep out of it—but I was so idiotically gone on Joe; and I must say Charles is quite as good an excuse for marriage as Joe—he is so young and full of life, and has such pretty ways. It is nice, too, to have one's man well off—Joe and I will have to go for our honeymoon third class."

Where was the grudging spirit, the carping, her narrow bringing-up had taught her to expect? These dear girls were all looking at the matter entirely from her point of view because she too was a girl. It was all very pleasant.

They chattered away the whole morning. In the afternoon the men joined them, and they all went for a walk together. They met the party of the night before and exchanged a word or two. The strangers had heard of the new engagement. Perhaps Beckwith had mentioned it, or the landladies assumed it.

They offered congratulations—rather more frank than were in good taste from such strangers. Charlie was not in the least embarrassed. He looked manly and dignified. Hilary was very proud of him. The little woman with the small mouth said bitter things about marriage. Beckwith said nothing.

When she went to bed that night Hilary found a letter in her room. It had just been sent by hand. The writing was Beckwith's. She opened it impatiently, vexed that her pleasanter thoughts should be interrupted.

The letter rushed straight into its subject without formal address, either because

Beckwith knew he must not say Hilary and would not say Miss Deane, or through his inveterate tendency towards the dramatic.

"If you had told me nothing, I should have guessed all from your face this afternoon. From my heart I rejoice that you are happy, and so the wrong I did you has ceased to exist. It is curiously just that we should meet just at the time of your triumph and my trouble. I do not say it was not hard for me to see another man take the place that was once mine, but I do not complain. It is fit that I, who made one good woman suffer, should suffer myself through another good woman, but I do not complain. I would not have it otherwise. You said last night that you had not forgiven me. Surely you can forgive me now 'you are comforted, and I am tormented.'"

Hilary tossed the letter on the toilette-table, laughing. "Poor Teddy," she said, as she began to take down her hair and brush it, and anoint it with one of Catrin's "natural remedies." "Poor Teddy, just the same as ever, and to think this sort of thing once impressed me, filled me with reverence—a sort of sacred shame that I should be chosen by fate as his comforter! Poor Teddy," and she laughed again.

A little later she flung aside her brushes, caught up the letter, and threw herself on the bed, crying; but she was not crying over the letter; she was crying because the letter had made her laugh.

#### CHAPTER V.

It was spring again, and a warm day. Hilary Deane, in a black frock, leaned against the gate of a little country churchyard. Just the same Hilary as she was last year; her hair was a little brighter in colour perhaps, and the spring mode of dressing it was even more becoming to her than that of the previous autumn had been—that was all the change. She leaned against the wall, looking at the hill she would have to climb to reach home half impatiently.

Presently Mr. Beckwith came along the road; he was walking quickly and unsteadily with his hat drawn over his eyes. When he saw Hilary he stopped short.

He stared at her for a moment as if he were not quite sure whether she were really there, or whether his own feeling of the fitness of things had called up a vision of her.



"You are here," he said at last. "That is as it should be again."

"Of course I am here," she said, as surprised as he was, but more indifferent. "And you?"

"The Suttons have come to their house here for the summer."

"And she is with them? And that would bring you still?" she said.

"It would have brought me," he answered passionately, "while my life lasted. Whatever I am—whatever I have been to others—in this matter I was true. Have you heard—in the village——"

"No, we are not in the way of hearing things. What has happened?"

"You don't know?"

"No; is there anything to know?"

He flushed, and pushed his hat back, hesitating.

"It will seem less terrible, and I look less ridiculous, if I tell you myself, and you are sure to hear it," he said. "You remember what I said last year, how curiously just it was that we should meet then; it is even more just that we should meet now—that I should tell you this myself. You remember that woman——"

"Mrs. Sutton's friend, whom you pointed out to me?"

"You remember how I thought of her; how I suffered at the insults put upon her; the degradation she suffered from contact with her husband—with her husband's friends?"

"I remember one friend. The man you said should not be allowed to live in the same hemisphere."

"She went away with him last night. I am perhaps the only one who did not know what was going on as long ago as last year. You are laughing."

"How can one help laughing? It is such an amusing world."

"And you and I have had such a good time in it."

They both leaned silently against the wall, thinking. Hilary was the first to speak:

"It is all so very conventional; there is something so very commonplace about poetic justice."

He thought over that a little before he answered:

"You at least are happy now."

"Oh, no, I am only just beginning to know just how unhappy I am."

"Are you married yet, or when will it be?"

She drew her eyebrows together, and looked at him, surprised.

"Ah, you do not know? Of course not—you have been too much occupied—but, do you not see where I am? Do you not understand that—and this?"

She made a little gesture towards a new grave just within the churchyard, and then towards her black frock. Beckwith did understand; he turned very white with honest sympathy, and laid his hand on hers; she did not even notice him.

"It did not take one altogether by surprise," she went on. "When I met his mother I seemed to know—to understand what those great strong brothers and sisters meant by saying that he was like her, and why they were always praising his goodness in going every winter to Algiers to his mother, and they did not want to admit the truth even to themselves. When I saw his mother—I knew—I saw the likeness. We stayed there during the winter—she talked of coming to England, but we left her there. He did not seem to get over it. There was one cold night travelling—we began to be anxious—we got nearly home first—then we brought him here. This is his native village, you know. His sisters came for the funeral, two of them are married—they have gone now; grandmother and I go away this evening, that is why I came here this afternoon."

She ended as she had begun—dully and without emotion. All the while she spoke the wind had been blowing the scent of violets and narcissus from the grave towards them. Beckwith's eyes were full of tears.

"Hilary!" he said gently, "I am more sorry for your trouble than you are for mine."

"This isn't a trouble at all."

Her voice was hard, and there were no signs of tears on her face. She was looking at him almost vindictively.

"That is what I cannot forgive you. My lover is dead, and I do not care very much. How can you expect me to forgive you such a wrong as that? Last year, after I had seen you, I thought it would be possible for me to marry him, and make him happy; but I was not happy; I was afraid his mother would think me too old and sad for her son. She would have thought so if she had not known how little it would matter to him what I was like. She was sorry for me because she saw what was coming, and I had to

pretend to be more anxious than I was because I was ashamed of my hard heart. I didn't love him, I didn't love him, and if he had lived he would have found me out. Can I forgive you that? And now when all his bright life and pleasant ways, and his love for me, is shut in and stamped down under that, and I have laid flowers there because it was expected of me, still, I do not care very much. Can I forgive you that?"

"I am sorry, Hilary—I am very sorry."

"What is the good of that now?"

"Nothing, I know. I wish I had acted differently; I wish we had both died—that evening—long ago—in the garden."

"Of course you do. That is the right thing to wish at this crisis. Naturally you would wish it."

"I wish it with all my heart. If one could only foresee. It seemed such a pretty incident then. I can see the starlight, smell the grasses——"

"No," she said roughly, "it is the flowers on that boy's grave you smell."

"Don't, Hilary. I am afraid of you. My girl, how bitter you are. Don't you believe that I am punished?"

"It makes such a little difference whether you are punished or not."

"If there were anything I could say or do."

"But there is nothing. I have sometimes thought, when I felt saddest, that if Heaven itself were to give you into my hands, body and soul, for me to take what vengeance on you I would, I should not have cared for vengeance, because no suffering on your part could give me back what I lost when I lost faith in you."

"Hilary, I loved you, I loved you really."

"I think you did then—for a day or two."

"I had no idea it would be so serious for you."

"I was foolish; that, of course, is your quarrel against me. I took things seriously."

You must remember I was very young, so I believed in you."

"Age has not made me wise. The men in town are laughing over my blindness and folly."

"Don't grudge them their laughter if it is any pleasure to them. The people in the village are pitying me. I don't see why they should not."

They both stood silent again, each thinking their own thoughts.

"Did he know about me?" Beckwith asked presently.

"No. I was too ashamed of the incident ever to mention it, especially after he had seen you. He had such a poor opinion of you. I did not like to tell him I had loved you."

"You did love me once, Hilary."

"Oh, yes," and she laughed. "I have never got over it, as you see."

"What are you going to do next?" he asked.

"Go on living, there is nothing else to do."

"Back among your own people?"

"Oh, no, that would be intolerable."

"Yes, and my old life would be intolerable to me."

Then there was another long silence. When he looked up it was with the impatience of one speaking a necessary platitude.

"We ought to be married, Hilary—I really see nothing else for us."

"It is the obvious ending of a story such as ours," she said. "Circumstances exact it of us. We shall not be happy, you know."

He looked a moment at her improved face and figure.

"I am not so sure of that," he said almost tenderly.

She laughed quite heartily.

"Of course we shall be happy," she said.

"My grandmother will be very pleased. She was most anxious for me to be married, you know, and as for you, think how pleasant it will be for you to have a wife who understands you as well as I do."

#### NOTE.

The Terms to Subscribers having their Copies sent direct from the Office: Weekly Numbers, 10s. 10d. the Year, including postage; and Monthly Parts, 12s. 6d.

Post Office Orders should be made payable to ALBERT SEYMOUR, 12, St. Bride Street, Ludgate Circus, E.C.

#### ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT.

For particulars respecting Advertisement Spaces, address THE ADVERTISING MANAGER of "All the Year Round," No. 163, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

*The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and their corresponding dates. The names are listed in a column on the left, and the dates are listed in a column on the right. The names are: John Doe, Jane Smith, and Bob Johnson. The dates are: 1990, 1991, and 1992.